

February 17, 2022

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you develop your Fiscal Year 2023 budget, I respectfully ask you to prioritize full funding for South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (SFER) to build upon the historic momentum that has been achieved in recent years to restore America's Everglades. In order to meet the capacity of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct ecosystem restoration efforts and to keep Everglades restoration on track in a manner that is consistent with the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS), I urge you to request no less than \$725 million for Everglades restoration in your forthcoming FY23 budget request to Congress.

The greater Everglades is an ecosystem of unparalleled significance and biodiversity on which approximately nine million Floridians rely for their drinking water, and which provides the recreational, outdoor, and economic opportunities that underscore the culture and way of life of Floridians. When the ecosystem is healthy, it provides security for an economy that is wholly dependent on a clean, unspoiled environment. When the system is unhealthy, the fallout can be disruptive to our constituents' lives and can even be detrimental to human health. Providing sufficient construction funding to fulfill the Army Corps of Engineer's capacity to execute SFER is integral to ensuring the long term health of the Everglades, which in turn is key to securing economic certainty for Florida's residents by reducing the risk of toxic algal blooms that kill wildlife including fish, dolphins, manatees, birds, sea turtles, and terrestrial scavengers on a massive scale; reversing harmful salinities in our coastal estuarine ecosystems that kill the vital sea grasses that nurture wildlife; and, minimizing the risk that Florida's drinking water will be compromised by rising sea levels. These symptoms of ecological degradation that threaten the health and livelihoods of my constituents and the vitality of Florida's environment and economy can largely be addressed by expeditiously advancing Everglades restoration. Everglades restoration will undoubtedly provide hope, health, and security to Floridians for generations. Everglades restoration truly is the bedrock of Florida's future.

Of funds made available for SFER, it is my expectation that substantial investments will be made available to finance the construction of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir, which is the single most important Everglades project for reducing the volume and duration of harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee, and for sending more water south. The EAA Reservoir, the completion of which has already been delayed by thirteen months, requires

an additional \$3 billion in timely and consistent federal investment to be completed expeditiously. Any additional delays to this project, which has been prioritized by the State of Florida but astonishingly did not receive a single dollar in federal supplemental funding allocated by your administration, would be completely unacceptable.

The State of Florida is more than willing and capable to continue fulfilling its role and share in the execution of SFER. I hope the Federal government under your leadership will strive to be a better partner in Everglades restoration by reciprocating financial investment and directing funds to projects prioritized by the State of Florida, such as the EAA reservoir. Federal obligations for SFER are expected to increase by several billion dollars over the next several years due to new authorizations. As such, fulfilling Army Corps construction capacity for SFER by including no less than \$725 million for Everglades restoration in your FY23 budget request must be a priority.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to working with you on this important bipartisan effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator

CC:

Michael Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works